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ABSTRACT

While criticizing misconceptions and bias about American Indian history and culture, this paper suggests that American Indians should make efforts to better the lives of their children by changing the educational process. In Minnesota, the Indian School Council in 1989 recommended that a public school district be established and controlled by American Indians. The bill failed in the Education Conference Committee of the Minnesota legislature. The passage of this bill would have been a positive step in improving the education of American Indian children. A target school, established in 1989 for American Indian children in Minneapolis (Minnesota), centralizes students to provide the help they need. There is a waiting list for children who want to attend this school. Another idea being explored involves having teachers demonstrate cultural competencies. These teachers would be capable of recognizing and understanding: (1) the cultural differences of the meaning of independence; (2) the importance of age respect; (3) the interrelationship of all living things; and (4) the use of indirect communication in disciplining children. If the American education system continues to be unsuccessful in educating American Indian children, American Indians will be forced to create a tribal-public sector for American Indian children. All children would be welcome to attend such schools, where independence of everyone is assumed, polite and subtle communication is the order of the day, decorous behavior to one's elders is the norm and the natural order of nature with connection to all living things is taught daily. (LP)

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# *Introduction:*

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*When I was younger I had an opportunity to visit the Cloisters Museum in New York. One of the beauties on display there is the set of Unicorn tapestries. Unicorns are described in varied ways. Most agree they are mythical creatures. Only a virgin it was said, could lure one to her. Beautiful they are, at least in pictures. I have always loved unicorns. They are indeed beautiful creatures. It dismayed me to see pictures of one being torn to bits by large, ugly, cruel, uncivilized dogs. It did not make sense, in my mind, to hunt one down and cage it in a small enclosure.*

*The 'De Historia et Veritate Unicornis' and other written material on unicorns make it clear that unicorns are not real. They are useful in metaphor only and, because of their beauty, are apt to be found in picture books, especially in alphabet books as as an example of a word beginning U. I finally realized after some reading that unicorn references found in many books, including the Bible, were meant to refer to Jesus Christ and his said-to-be virgin mother, Mary. Some of these explanations are extremely obtuse, and seem incredibly twisted to eventually mean Christ and his mother. The messy metaphorical language is now accepted, as evidenced by the customary twists existing frequently in literature. The bigger question is what does this acceptance mean for our children?*

Tribal Peoples of Turtle Island in their struggle with the Education System of the United States: A Focus on Tribal people of the Midwestern Woodlands.

Paper prepared for presentation to Congreso Mundia
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# Words and their importance

It was confusing to me as a child learning to read to understand the various meanings of certain words. I found it upsetting that in reality and in application what a word seemed to mean did not mean that at all. I found this to be especially true when the dominant group in the United States was involved.

A word that will give credence to this thought is *discover*. It was and continues to be very upsetting to observe how that word is used. English dictionaries used in the United States and Europe, or the so-called "western world", define *discover* as, "to find or come upon anything for the first time"[1] Children learn then, with the help of a twist, that Henry Schoolcraft discovered the source of the Mississippi River. And this is accepted, even though white historians and Schoolcraft himself agree that a Chippewa man, Ozawindib, shared his maps of the region with Schoolcraft. And even showed old Henry the way to the source of the mighty river.

The Minnesota Historical Society Press of St. Paul, Minnesota in 1989 published their new history curriculum, Northern Lights: going to the sources. This curriculum accompanied their new history book Northern Lights The Story of Minnesota's past. On page 73 of this highly touted curriculum, in Activity 8 entitled "Getting to the Land", a picture is shown with the caption *"In 1832 Henry Schoolcraft led a group of explorers to the lake they named Itasca."* Now, Mr. Schoolcraft is leading the explorers. In my mind, and in my understanding of the word led, he still was behind Ozawindib. In these more enlightened times, apparently, the word discover is used in a more enlightened (twisted) way.

Frequently, we are faced in school books, newspapers, and the like with the 'fact' that the Tribal people in the Americas got here via the Bering Strait land bridge. Some materials are written in a careful manner, and state this is only a theory. Others are not as careful.

On p. 745 of the Holt dictionary, the word *theory*, is defined as *"an opinion, based on careful observation and study, of how something works or has come about; an explanation that fits the known facts but has not yet been proven true."* In the teacher's annotated version of Exploring American History with a copyright date of 1991 by Globe Book Company, Inc, 190 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632 on p. T25, there is a portion colored blue and meant to enlighten the teacher on Unit I. The unit overview begins with "The early people of the Americas" and goes on to say "About 30,000 years ago the first people to settle in America came from Asia over a land bridge that connected North America and Asia on the present site of the Bering Strait." Later on, on page T31, under the Unit 2 title, "Europeans Explore the Americas", it is not surprising to read in the unit overview, "...when Christopher Columbus discovered the new world..."

Other examples abound of majority educators' influence on who, what, when, where, why and how children learn in the United States. In Minnesota, as in other states, there are compulsory education laws. Children are required by law to attend school. In order for Tribal peoples, American Indians to combat the unwanted, and unwarranted value-laden educational process that is killing the spirit, family life, and wholeness of their children, they will have to assume the heavy burden of pushing their case through the State and Federal courts.

However, American Indians throughout the United States have taken various actions throughout the centuries to better the lives of the children as it relates to the educational process. The activities, reports, and other matters relative to the education of American Indian children will be explored.

## Values: whose?

From time, to time, it is apparent that non-Indians are aware of what their value structure means, in reality, in the big picture, and whole sense. Recently, I heard a radio address by a well-known educational figure, who painted a picture of what capitalism means and has meant to the North American continent. When one's whole being is focussed on making, keeping, and obtaining more money regardless of anything else, it follows that the land and people are going to be used out of proportion to the present population's needs. He said that the action of destroying this continent is continuing at a dizzying rate, and that the North American continent has suffered this rate way out of proportion to the rest of the world.

This is not news to thinking, reasonable, spiritually-strong, value-practicing American Indians. It has been visibly apparent to anyone that majority children are not taught to honor the earth as their mother. It is hurtfully apparent that majority society does not value a relationship between all living things on this earth. In the first years of the decade of the seventies the news media in my city, and my state hosannaed the news that there was to be a new zoo in Apple Valley, and that, Whales were going to be put in the new zoo! The superintendent at the time did not understand my dismay, and anger when he wanted to disburse, at public expense, brochures of the new zoo, especially as he was a member of the Zoo board. It was not surprising when these Whales sickened and died regardless of what the Zoo's doctors could do. Now-days, even American Indians take their children to zoos forgetting the teachings of the old ones about how one is to treat the Animals.

The news daily via television, radio and newspapers cries that the world is destroying the rain forests. Just recently, I read that the last vestiges of primal rain forest left in the United States, in Hawaii, is being destroyed, and will be further destroyed to build and maintain a energy station for the benefit of tourists.

Our Elders in the only way they knew, ensured that we would take care of the earth. They taught us she is our mother. The only way to ensure all children pay heed and respect to living things, is to teach that all living things are connected. Hence how one acts, and reacts will be totally different from that presently practiced in the Western world.

Our old ones, especially, taught us that each of us were free; no one person could speak for another. No one person had the right to impose his will on another. Think what that simple thought means.

For one thing, when human beings are not used to be ordered around either individually, or in groups, it becomes mighty difficult to put together an ordered army, or wander far afield conquering or annihilating human beings. Certainly American Indian Tribes killed each other, and members of other Tribes. Yet, a close study of what the rules were of warrior societies, who evolved for example, to judge honor as being closely aligned not to how many were killed, but *how many might have been killed !* These and other nuances of American Indian Warrior societies lead to another path entirely.

Its also obvious that in any reasonable study of history that such free people had much to offer the young struggling colonies. Recently the scholars of the Haudenausaunee, commonly referred to as the Iroquois, have made the case for the freedom of Tribal peoples, with its intellectual accouterments as the precursor, and predecessor of the vaunted American Constitution with its famous checks and balances. Yet, American children are not taught about Benjamin Franklin's intercourse with American Indian Leaders; and the Covenant Chain, the diplomatic interchange named in a metaphorical sense by the Iroquois to label their relations with the 13 colonies, and those who preceded them is not discussed or named in American history books.

*Like the unicorn, American Indians were gored by those who hunted for land, and a place to practice their religion free from decree, massacres, and inquisitions. American Indians were mutilated, scalped, raped, pillaged and killed. The children were forcibly taken from their mothers, fathers, and relatives, and sent to boarding schools far away from their homes.*

*Americans want the Tribal people in their picture books. They belong as the image behind the I, in Alphabet books. American Indians are good for the tourist business, from sea to shining sea. They look good on postcards in their feathers, bangles, and beads. And like the unicorn, the Indian is to be only a symbol, not a living, breathing human being. Much better really, to admire Indians on paintings, in sculpture, as displays in the Smithsonian, the national museum.*

In Minnesota, May is known as Indian month. It is a time to celebrate American Indians. Indians also fall in with this scheme. The American Indian newspapers are filled with special events to note American Indian month. School districts' personnel call daily asking how to celebrate. They ask for curriculum for the month, and they want names of speakers they can ask to come and talk to the little ones. They want the speakers to come at no cost to the school district.

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*The thickness of your skin shall be seven spans which is to say that you shall be proof against anger, offensive actions and criticism.*

*Your heart shall be filled with peace and goodwill and your mind filled with a yearning for the welfare of the people of the confederacy.*

*With endless patience, you shall carry out your duties and your firmness shall be tempered with tenderness for your people.*

*Neither anger nor fury shall find lodgement in your mind and all your words andactions shall be marked with calm deliberation.*

*In all of your deliberation in the confederate council, in your efforts at law making, in all of your offical acts, self interest shall be cast into oblivion.*

*Cast not over yourbehind you the warnings of the nephews and nuces should they chide you for any error or wrong you may do, but return to the way of the Great Law which is just and right.*

*Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people, and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yetbeneath the surface of the ground - the unborn of the future nation.*

*(Words given Legislators of the Iroquois Confederacy by the Elders c. 16th century)*

## Logically speaking...

Only when American Indians are viewed as subhuman does it make sense that Columbus *discovered* America, or that Schoolcraft was the leader in finding the source of the Mississippi River. To disavow each and every Tribal society's own stories of its beginnings, and there are over 300 Tribal groups still extant in the U.S. and continue to teach that instead these people came from Asia[3] is to treat important Life beliefs, Faith, and Elder teachings as just so much garbage.

Cotton Mather, an early Puritian minister believed apparently, that Indians were led to the Americas by the devil so as to put a portion of the earth beyond the reach of the Bible.[4] He believed the Indians were the devil's chosen, much in the way, the Jews were God's chosen. In the review briefs offered on the back of a book on Mather one person say it is a wonderful achievement, and that Cotton Mather is made to be "believable, yes, even likable." Mather, and others of his ilk had much to do with the founding of colleges like Yale, and Harvard. In these institutions, as in others like them, the older the materials in the libraries, the better, when one wants to prove something. It is best to prove something by pointing to it in writing. It is no wonder really, that American children are taught subtly, but consistently, that American Indians are of no account, that their ways of behaving, of believing, or what they own are to be discounted. To deal with the contradictions of what these behaviors bring to the Judeo-Christian way of behaving, the dominant society can point to their proofs.

And they do.

Books, magazines, articles, videos, and all media articles are rift with these scholars' opinions. They are quick to scorn in print anyone who might wander outside the scholar-pen (or enclosure.) When an author writes of his notion that the Iroquois were involved in the thinking portion of the Constitution, that is, American Indians had an *intellectual* oar in the Americas; what happens?

Men such as James A. Clifton, a professor of Anthropology and History at the University of Wisconsin in Green Bay brings out his book, Being and becoming Indian , biographical studies of North American Frontiers[5] and in the introductory chapter entitled, "Alternate identities and Cultural Frontiers, he states that people do not know how to think about Indians, "critically and analytically." On p. 9 of this piece he tells of the editors who believe in and report on Slow Turtle and Medicine Story who talk about the Iroquois and the Constitution. He makes it apparent in the one example he uses that to believe American Indians had anything to do with the Constitution is silly. Because of his slanted, uncritical, and unanalytical introductory chapter, it is difficult to believe in, and enjoy the other chapters in the book, many of which were, probably of worth. →

## American Indian intellectuals reason.

The twentieth century is marked by the plethora of communication. Many Americans have not only heard many excellent speeches, they see each day on their televisions, people from other countries talking of their ideas. In September of 1987, and March of 1988, I was privileged to hear Dr. John Mohawk. Mohawk is a lecturer at the State University of New York, at Buffalo. He is of the Seneca nation of the Haudenausaunee. John Mohawk is one of the best speakers I have ever heard in my fifty-one years on this earth. Although I was thrilled when I heard the brothers Kennedy, John, Robert, and Edward; I was even more enthralled when I heard John Mohawk that September talk about the *Iroquoian Influence on the Constitution.*[6] In his address, he traces the roots of the signing of the American Constitution to 1492 because as he says, that year was a watershed for European peoples. He likens this era called discovery, as a discovery of "the limitations of the European way of thinking."

During this address, Mohawk explores, and discusses the theme of these limitations. He speaks of 2 crises of faith for the Europeans. One was the time of the plagues which struck at everyone and anyone indiscriminately. People began to question their faith in God. The second had to do with Europeans being struck with the "discovery" of the Americas. Their scripture which was supposed to be all knowledge, self-contained, did not mention the "new world". Eventually, people demanded to read the scriptures in their own language.

As Mohawk, in his storyteller style held us all in the palm of his hand that fall evening, we were amazed to discover one and one-half hours later, that he had kept us attentive, and interested. This was an after-dinner speech, and he did not begin until 8:00 P.M. We had had a full conference day by then.

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Mr. Mohawk in that speech talked about the convergence of ideas that happened between the Iroquois on one hand, and the Englishmen of the 13 colonies on the other. One group had centuries of freedom, and had evolved 6 distinct groups of peoples into a 6-Nation confederacy, practiced women's suffrage, absorbed conquered peoples into the warp and woof of their society, and were kind to the hungry, sick, and lame as well. The other group had struggled to build what they had left behind in the old country. But they knew what they didn't want from that old country. They wanted freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and they didn't want the divine right of Kings. Mohaw builds the case that our modern world is a product of the confluence of the traditions of thought of the Europeans who came here, and the native peoples who were dwellers on Turtle Island. Mohawk spoke too, of John Rutledge, one of the signers of the constitution who spoke of, and referred to the Great Law of Peace, when he discussed what he wanted in the Constitution. Mohawk mentioned the researcher who is writing a book on these evidences. However, he was less impressed with this written piece of evidence than with the overall historical evidence that exists which he discussed during his talk.

The other time I was privileged to hear from John Mohawk was at an Indigenous Peoples' law conference sponsored by Indian law students from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The theme developed for that evening was around the topic of economics, and what has evolved since the time of John Locke. He talked about studying the historical records, and ...

*In the sixteenth century it is clear, from reading historical records there in England, many people had discovered that here were more profitable ways to hold land rather than leave, in the case of England, peasants*
*living on the land . It became profitable to push peasants off the land, and to enclose it. ... English law... its major elements, enclosure and the techniques of enclosure ....commercial uses of the land....changes in the way people now relate to the land -pattern in which the law is used through series of sort of a complex process of rationalizations, to explain why a people who are living peacefully growing crops that sustain their families, are legimately removed from that land because they lack a piece of paper, the proper piece of paper or they lack a proper agreement in history or....*[8]

He then discussed how money was invented, and how the Lockean thinking held that "human beings would be compelled by their own rationality to behave in such a way that they would use their best mental facilities toward the accumulation of this money." This was described as rational behavior, and in Mohawk's words this means to them that, "only sane and only intelligent people in the culture will be the wealthy people". He made the case of where indigenous people fit in the scale of that thinking; if, peasants were the bottom, then indigenous people were "non-existent". He discussed the "march of civilization across the continent", what that meant, and continues to mean to indigenous peoples who believe, value, and continue to live according to those values. He makes the case for the *policy of enclosure* being the policy of the United States, in the Americas, and in the world.

Enclosure is a state of mind, and as John Mohawk said that evening, "you don't need a fence to have enclosure. A bad foreign policy will do it",[9] and he used the policy of destroying the rain forests in the United States, and South America as an example.

I commend Dr. Mohawk in the fine activity of thinking. Mohawk is of an oral world. He does not have stacks and reams of books and other materials for readers to glean his substance. *New Voices from the Longhouse/ an anthology of contemporary Iroquois Writing*, edited by Joseph Bruchac, from the Greenfield Review Press, Greenfield Center, New York(1989) has a small but important piece from Mohawk, "Origins of Iroquois Political Thought" beginning on p. 218 to 228.

Anytime, Mohawk is in the neighborhood, grab your best friend, and spend a few delightful hours listening to a true *native-born* intellectual, who as Paul Johnson says is simply a fellow who will tell mankind how to conduct its affairs.[10] Unlike Johnson's secular intellectuals, Mohawk makes no bones about his need for spiritual connectedness; yet, that wasn't what Johnson's clerical intellectuals were about; after all.

Mohawk, and others of his ilk, the indigenous peoples' children are a new breed of intellectual. They discuss an amalgam of ideas; a convergence of ideas. Intellectuals who tell mankind how it ought to conduct its affairs, but its up to the listener, because when one practices freedom, and has for centuries; when one practise multi-culturalism, and how to get along with one's neighbors be they Seneca, Chippewa, or Navaho; the new world boys and girls learned along with their mother tongue how to get along with the two-legged, the four-legged; and all are connected. What happens to one, happens to the other, be he Thunderbird, Bear, Human being, Fish from the water, or greens growing.

Perhaps it can be taught in school.

Schooling now in the United States, in Canada, in North America is primarily a bureaucracy.

## Whose responsibility?

Interestingly enough, a bureaucracy has its uses. When change is contemplated in a bureaucracy; and believe it, schooling structure is a bureaucracy, it can be useful to point out to the bureaucrats how to effectively and efficiently change the institution. It is necessary to educate the highest people in the bureaucracy, then hold them accountable for what happens in their area of responsibility. Second, it is important to spread change over time so school districts can absorb the costs of change. Third, it is highly important to use procedures for change that will allow those lower in the bureaucracy to absorb and learn new skills in a friendly atmosphere. Using intimidation, or coercion is strictly unproductive and against most values that are held by those in whose interests the changes are advanced. Fourth, people who must change their ways of teaching, or interacting with children from another culture must be allowed to chose the method, timing and form of instruction.

Most well-intentional efforts in the past for making changes in the world view of the majority have not taken into account the extremely intrenched value system of the majority. As we do, they truly believe they are right in how they behave, how they treat each other, how some are superior to others in, for example, a bureaucracy; that it is okay to give orders to those below you in a bureaucracy regardless of age or other factors. They truly believe that because they are still the most numerous in the United States they are right. And frequently, ***might makes right.***

We who have different values and want to teach others as we have been taught must do so in a range acceptable to our own value system. Hence we are caught in an age-old bind. We cannot use the structure of those we wish to show another way.

We must use the ways we know and believe are right. Therefore, we allow and insist on choice for those instructed. We, practice what we preach.

The elementary, secondary institutions however, are not the real target, when one asks who is responsible?

In the United States, students attend colleges and other higher education institutions where they declare their majors. They choose to become teachers and administrators in the educational system.

The State(s) department of Education *licence* teachers, administrators and others in the school system.

The k-12 institutions primarily hire licensed personnel as *assumed* ready to teach, with the appropriate skills. That is why there are colleges of Education for teachers and Educational Administration programs. Licenced status allows beginning teachers in the Minneapolis public schools to apply for jobs that will earn at least $20,000 for 9 months and up to $45,000 for 9 months for those who have been in the system for 15 years and for administrators such as principals to make a minimum of $40,000.00 for 10 months $75,000 and up for those who serve in the Superintendent's cabinet for 12 months, with the Superintendent making over $100,000.00 for 12 months with perks included.

Is it any wonder that minority parents insist these people have suitable knowledge and the skills to teach their children?

What happens in reality is that k-12 institutions spend millions of dollars annually on ***staff development***. Usually these workshops are not meant or provided for support personnel such as clerks (who greet the parents first in schools), bus drivers (who drive the students to and from schools), lunchroom personnel (who spend at least 30 minutes a day with students) and central office personnel. In Minneapolis, there are up to seventeen bargaining units for school personnel. It is not the norm, or even the exception for these unions to be asked to accept certain concepts for staff development that must be required for their union members.

Staff development usually occurs on days that students are not present. They are usually mandated, or forced to attend. They are given a menu, or list of choices from which they are to choose to spend their forced time. They are usually lectured to by some expert brought in at great expense to the district who will tell these people how they do it in their hometown, or state, or district, usually many miles and states away from the home state.

They are given great numbers of papers called hand-outs. Many of these, unfortunately, are never read. They are given either none, or unattractive, fatty food and the rooms are not arranged for extensive discussion; if it were allowed. Usually, no talking, or discussion is allowed. The participants sit dumbly, in rows, for hours at a time, bored out of their skulls.

Unfortunately, the staff development procedures utilized by most, if not all districts are doomed to failure (to make change). And equally unfortunately, these procedures mirror the way teachers will treat their students. It is a vicious, repeating cycle.

All of this effort, time and wasted people power costs lots and lots of tax money!

I ask and continue to ask, why are not the public school leaders, the state department of education leaders and the legislatures asking, nay, demanding that colleges of education and

# Methodology of change: an analysis

departments of educational administration in graduate schools graduate people who already have the necessary skills to teach the children. Then staff development-mavens won't need to try to fill the void in a manner that recalls the cry of the White Rabbit to MaryAnn when she didn't do something properly, "too little, too late, and too obvious."

It is my contention that the Legislature, the colleges of education that exist at state expense and state department officials who issue teaching and administrative licences are responsible for the sad, tragic, demeaning, expensive state of affairs that exist in our schools with teachers, administrators and support staff that do not, cannot effectively, efficiently and competently teach our children. At least for Indians, this state of affairs has gone on for centuries! It may be open to question if they are successful with white children, or is it just that white parents are the majority, with their values reflective in the system; hence the parents take up the slack of the school system; or if necessary and affordable, place their children in private schools?

Now we see the thrust of school systems attempting, with good faith presumably, to provide staff development activities that portend to teach them about Learning Styles. Apparently, teachers and support staff are supposed to learn how to teach to at least, five different cultural groups in our system. I am overwhelmed, especially when I know that although our district has black, Indian, Asian and Hispanic children of color in addition to the varied white cultures, I also know that within the, for example, Indian group there exists 42 *different* Tribes and that within the Asian group are 2 Hmong groups and 3 other Asian groups. What does this activity mean? Is it an honest effort, or is it an effort meant to confuse people and eventually doom the effort to failure?

In an analysis of the institution, it becomes apparent that in the schooling structure, elementary, secondary, or k-12 as it is known in the United States[11] as well as higher education[12] depends heavily on the structure known as *a committee* to pursue changes in the organization. The committee structure itself, seemingly, is not studied, or subject to change.

Recently, in traveling to another city I picked up a magazine to while away the time, and I chanced upon an ad put there, by a car manufacturer. I ripped out and saved the large, one page homily on committees:

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***"committees are, by nature, timid. They are based on the premise of safety in numbers; content to survive inconspicuously, rather than take risks and move independently, without the freedom for new ideas to be tried, to fail, and to ultimately succeed, the world will not move ahead, but live in fear of its own potential"*** [13]

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Presumably, the above statemen presented in a popular magazine was to tell the world that a compay will do something different; to sell cars!

The statement, does describe how committees work in the schooling structure in the United States. Persons charged with analyzing the curriculum, changing it, or incorporating the contributions of other Nations and ethnic groups other than Anglo-Saxon white folks are usually afraid to make any changes at all.

Yes, there are surface cosmetic changes that will blow away or evaporate when the winds of back-lash occur.

Presently, in my school district, there is wholesale effort to incorporate what is called multi-cultural education into the system. The district has put together a booklet called *Multicultural and Gender-Fair education Plan, superintendent's task force, Minneapolis public schools, May 1989*. The task force, or committee proposed six goal statements which are vague as goal statements tend to be. The booklet includes the multi-cultural education plan rule mandated by the State Board of Education. Districts must abide by these rules. The *Rule part 3500.0550* was adopted on December 13, of 1988. The effective date for each district to have a plan on multi-cultural education was to have been June 1, 1990; but recently, the Board, for reasons not explained, allowed for a year's grace to provide it with plans from Minnesota's districts.

In neighboring Wisconsin, its legislature in 1989 through *Wisconsin Act 31* requires instruction in Indian history and culture beginning September 1, 1991 *at least twice in the elementary (k-8) grades and at least once in the high school grades.*[14] I talked to the people who work for the implementation of this charge. Unfortunately, the legislature did not provide sufficient funds to impact change in the schools. Is this quite laudatory effort thus set up for failure?

In neighboring Iowa, the Iowa legislature passed a multi-cultural instruction law approximately ten years ago. The Legislature required plans by July of 1980. Implementation was to be by July of 1985. As of January of 1989, in a review conducted by the Iowa Department of Education it was reported that 420 of Iowa's 433 schools have policy statements. Over 400 districts have written plans, and the department stated that approximately 100 schools have plans that can be rated good to excellent. They state the problem with most of the plans is the vague, general and unspecific objectives.[15]

Recently, in shuffling through papers I found a booklet put out by the State department of Education, State of Minnesota entitled, " A model to elimi-

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nate racism and sexism in education through the selection, revision and development of the instructional system", dated June 23, 1975! Clipped along with the booklet is a page I must have picked up somewhere from the Minneapolis public schools with the initials: ECC and the date 9-15-76 stating the district will utilize and implement this policy statement from the State Department of Minnesota. ECC stands for Ethnic cultural center, which at the time, was Minneapolis's commitment to multicultural education. The Center was funded and fully staffed, but their efforts in the end came to naught. And now 14 years later, we are going through the moves again.

As anyone can see, school districts, state departments and schooling personnel have excellent motives and once upon a time, as well as right in the present assume the stance and posture of wanting to do the right thing.

But in an analysis, over time and using the criteria set up by well-meaning committees(they) have accomplished exactly nothing in the institution. From time to time, committees spring up and the *form* of change once again goes through the surface moves that lulls those who are demanding change.

The *methodology of change*, or what passes for change must be studied along with the materials generated by committees, leaders of the committees and those in charge in school districts. Again, an analysis of who is in charge and who peoples the committees are usually of the same characteristics as the last time it was promised through policy that change would come. The person is charge is almost always white. He/she is an old veteran of these activities. He/she is tenured in his/her position and has done this before. He/she is skilled at delay tactics, utilizing boring procedures sure to daze any community activist that may want to be on the committee and generallly use ways and means of ensuring finally that many willstop coming to the meetings. The committee meetings almost always have a predominant white majority. The way the committee makes decisions is through a majority vote. Those present when the vote is taken, vote. The result is said to be the wish of the committee. Usually, when these results are given to the public, the public members of the committee are mentioned whether they participated or lasted through the life of the committee.

The other way to deaden any life any committee may have, at the beginning, is to scare everyone by talking about who will keep track of committee deliberations and *who will be the writer*. Writing anything scares most Americans and it therefore is no wonder the writing task falls to the school person who works for the school district; these people wrote the last documents (of change).

It is not surprising that committee results are vague, unclear, unspecific and use language such as,

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"students will demonstrate a positive self-concept and a sense of belonging."[16]

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School district leaders apparently see no problems in how the process of change is fashioned and school board members charged by the public to supervise the administrator for efficiency of the school district for all its constituents do not bother to ask analytical questions, or charge the superintendent with accountability for the bottom line; which is, is there change?,

did all this activity work?,
or did we spend lots of money
with no results for it?

Or at least, if there is no change in scores for minority children after millions of dollars spent on staff development, (or other schemes to fix the problem) what, at least did we learn from this debacle?

I report, with dismay, anger and the slow-dawning realization that,

No,

School board members do not hold superintendents responsible and superintendents do not hold their subordinates responsible. I ask, perhaps, it is all meant to be this way?

At first, I thought it was because the methodology was lax, the instruction unclear, or boring, or that minority people who were teaching about what our children needed (from teachers) were inept.

Next, I thought that perhaps, the white administrators, the school board members, the majority people in charge of these events were slow, or stupid. But they are not stupid.

Some may be slow, but it seems that most are feeling fine about their jobs; they want to keep them.

They do not want to learn about how our little ones learn. They are satisfied with the status quo of low-to-non-existent graduation rates for our children, low to the lowest status of achievement and attendance, and high drop-out rates that are a scandal in a state that gloats on its over-all high graduation rate, low drop-out rate, perhaps first in the country, and a governor that blows about the country and abroad that he is the "education governor"!

It is obvious that education has become an establishment, an empire. It is an *enclosure* that has ins and outs. It is an old boys club that protects the top, lucrative jobs. Over the years, this establishment has learned to milk all money sources while still crying how

hard it is to deal with children "at risk", or those who come from deprivation, or those who are different. Yet, they do not hesitate to take the money for these kids and spend it on all manner of things. It has been only recently, that Legislatures are asking, finally, how do these institutions spend their funds. In Minnesota, for the first time ever, the legislature asked during its 1988 session for an accounting of how desegregation funds were spent by the three largest school districts in the State. It appropriated funds to support a *study*, subsequently titled, the Stevens report after its Head, Leonard B. Stevens. Interestingly enough, the three superintendents in question and various state department officials were the persons most involved with Mr. Stevens and company.

The summary does not address the issue of Indians and how they are educated except to quote an old chapter from an old book of Meyer Weinberg, on the team and presumably paid. This incredible lack was in the face of the fact that one of the major schools, Duluth, Minnesota receives over one million dollars precisely because Indians are its largest minority. If Indians leave the Duluth system, they will no longer need desegregation funds, as there will no-one left to de-segregate.

## *A plan*

It was apparent several years ago, that if I were to affect change in any way in our district for our little ones that I must help Indians become principals. It was apparent that principals decide who they hire in the buildings. It was assistant principals that discipline, suspend and recommend expulsion for the students. It is the principal's office that one is sent to, that parents must seek first when entering a school. The principal is the boss in the school. The clerks, the busdrivers, the lunchroom personnel and all the support service as well as the teachers are subordinate to the principal. I and others who helped me embarked on a long range plan to find, seek and assist Indians to principalships.

It seemed too, that we must have a 'critical' number if there were to be any change.

Perhaps, five would do it. Principals meet regularly with each other. Observation told me that approximately five people seemed to make a difference in any group.

I have assisted at least five people to be assistant principals, hence, eventually, principals. Not all are Indian, but three are. What is the result?

Recently, I charged an assistant principal that identifies as Indian as "not only not catching the children as they pass through the rye, but he, in fact, pushes them over"[17] In our school district, assistant principals discipline the children. The system works, in my mind, as perhaps, the most glaring example of how something meant to help children will in the long run, ruin them.

It is thus: teachers are the sole authority, the absolute power in the classroom. What they say is what counts. They send the child to be punished to the principal. They deny entry to the child into the classroom. The child goes to see the assistant principal. He, without any investigation that accompanies most other charges that will be encountered by the student when he becomes an adult and that he is taught about in civics, believes the teacher's point of view and suspends the child for one, two, or up to 15 days. Most students are livid by the unfairness of these procedures.

Recently, I was part of an American Indian Accreditation Team[18] that was evaluating a Tribal-controlled American Indian school, Bugonaygeshig school located in Cass Lake and under the aegis of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe's Leech Lake Band, the Reservation Business Committee who serves as the school's school board. I was extremely interested to find that suspensions are handled three ways at Bug school. One way is the usual way, the kid is sent home. Another way is the child is given in-school suspension and the third way, is the child is suspended to the wood-pile. The wood-pile is important to the school as it is heated by burning wood. When the child serves his suspension on the woodpile, he/she piles wood into a neat pile. I asked a young man how he liked being sent to the woodpile. He responded, " when I did it, I go pile wood, when I didn't, I go home".*

It was lucidly clear to me that the Indian student has, a clear and present sense of fairness. I shudder when I think what we are teaching the students when we use the kinds of procedures presently, widely used in our school systems in the United States. Bug school, is unfortunately, a rare school in the way it deals with student discipline. I thank my Creator, daily, for such schools, and it brought joy to my being to see the Bugonaygeshig school children as they tumbled out of the buses. They laughed, smiled, talked and gave the aura of happy children. That is the way it is supposed to be!

That
is
the
way
it is not,
in most schools.



*conversation held with student during JOM - Title V Conference, 4-19-90, student presentation.

## What will work, Or has anything worked?

American Indians, for years, have advocated solutions to the improbable, unworkable education system forced upon them by the Federal and State governments. For years and years, public figures have formed task forces, received funding and *studied* American Indian education. The roll call of studies are bandied about in gatherings of American Indian educators; as each has studied at one time or another, the studies done over the years; and all can name the famous ones beginning with the Meriam report of 1928. Mr. Meriam and his colleagues were appalled, furious and called for action when it was made clear just how bad it was for Indian children in the educational environment.

Years later, in the late 1960s, Senators Mondale (Minnesota) and Kennedy (Mass.) were appalled, furious and called for action when it was made clear through Senate subcommittee hearings just how bad it was for indian children in the arena of education. These Senators, led in passing the famous 1972 Indian education act. This Act provides funds for school districts tied to official parent committees made up of Indian parents, Indian students, and teachers.

The Act, now called Title V, is still an active source of funding and advocacy for and from Indian parents. But it has been over 20 years now since that solution has been offered, tried and found wanting.

Recently, in 1990, April, the Secretary of Education under the Bush administration announced a *study* of Indian education. In subsequent years it will no doubt be called the Cavazos study. American Indians and white people have been named to the study and it will be co-chaired by an American Indian man and a white man. Although many Indian educators wrote to the secretary and in other ways deplored the time wasted on another study; there is to be a study of Indian education in the 1990s.

In 1916, at the early beginnings of the twentieth century, an Iroquois man, executive secretary of the Society of American Indians and Archeologist of the University of the State of New York wrote a piece for the **American Journal of Sociology**[19] and he began by stating the problem of American Indians had been discussed for three centuries.

His paper is still pertinent today especially as he discusses the seven stolen rights from American Indians.

*Among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*

From this century, Wilfred Wasson in writing his doctoral dissertation at the University of Oregon discussed the "Philosophical Differences between Europeans and native Americans as an explanation of the alienation of native American students from the Educational system". In his introduction, this Indian man from the Coos tribe of Oregon spells out his focus, "..will be the reasons why White people attempt to educate Indians, the attitudes of white people toward Indians and the aspects of the American educational system that do not allow the Indian to participate."[20] Mr. Wasson did an excellent job of discussing the conflicting thoughts on authority by Indians and nonIndians and what that means to the child in the classroom.

The whole study is excellent and should be read by education majors and practitioners in the school building, but his chapter II on concepts of authority is cogent, lucid and absolutely necessary.

In 1973, the Teacher Corps sponsored the first Indian Teacher Corps conference in Denver, Colorado. From that conference and with the special assistance of Richard LaCourse, a well known Indian editor and Tommy Thompson an Indian from Montana who directed a Teacher corps project put together a small book, **The schooling of native America**[21] The book has ten essays on the education of American Indian children and each is authored by an American Indian author, or authors. For example, Dillon Platero, Navaho, discussed multicultural education at Rough Rock, a demonstration school with a Navaho as the head person. Roger Wilson discussed teachers for Indian children and Vine Deloria Jr., discussed the inconsistencies of American education. Much of what was discussed by these Indian educators and others, is still relevant today, since, Indian education has not moved appreciably since those early seventies.

10

## What do those Indians want?

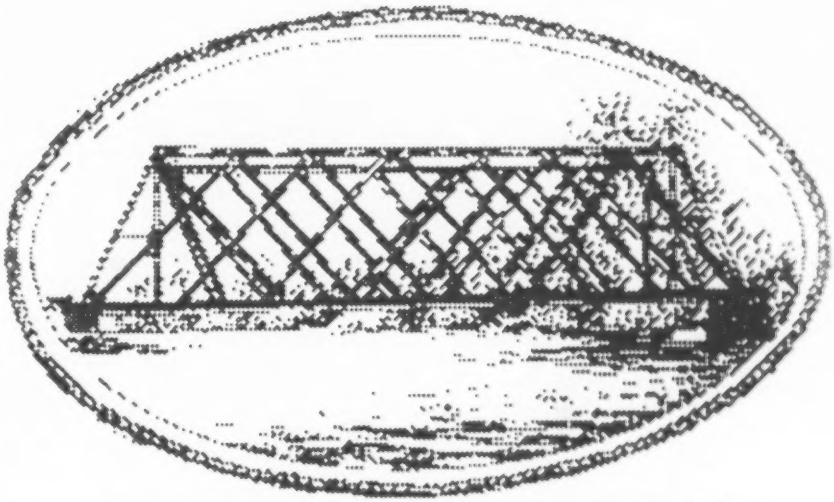
American Indians want an educational system that will work for their children. Amazingly enough, American Indians want what other United States citizens want. We want our children to have sufficient education to make a choice as to what they may want to do for the rest of their lives. We want them to be good citizens and good Tribal citizens. We want them to earn a living so they can support themselves and any children they bring into the world and to be concerned for the next generation. It is very little to ask.

In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood of Canada published a policy paper entitled *Indian control of Indian Education*.[22] In the preface, the brotherhood state the paper is to be used as "a basis for future common action in the area of education". The paper includes a philosophy, goals, principles and directions for any school program for Indian children. The summary statement states, :"Indian parents must have full responsibility and control of education. This is an extraordinary paper especially as it represents the pained cry of Indian parents everywhere in North America, Turtle Island.

In July of 1988, the Minnesota state legislature passed the Minnesota Indian education act of 1988. Section 18, 126.531 established an Indian school Council which was to consider governance and administration of schools or programs for Indian children. The council made up of 15 predominantly Indian educators issued a report,

*Indian school Council presentation to the State of Minnesota 1989 Legislature, OUR CHILDREN OUR FUTURE.*[23]

The Council report primarily called for the State of Minnesota to establish procedures to allow for a public school district to be established and controlled by American Indians.



A hue and cry was raised by primarily three foes; alternative primarily non-public Indian schools who feared competition, and perhaps excellence; American blacks who feared that allowing a seemingly segregated school for Indians would set back their agenda many years; and the entrenched education establishment consisting of teachers' unions, school superintendents, state department bureaucrats and education lobbyists (to the legislature).

The education establishment feared the loss of money. The Council raised the specter of losing children in droves from the present public schools. Not only would Indian children attend an excellent school, others, non-Indian would too. The Council showed figures to Indian parents on how much money each of their children was worth to the public school system. A sum of $5,000.00 was established as a bare minimum figure which timed by up to 3,000 Indian children in the metro area, plus the suburbs was just too much money toleave the establishment wallets.

The Council and their friends were fought tooth and nail with grim determination. The bill itself, that finally made it to the Education conference committee of the legislature as a last step before being included in an Omnibus education bill was a watered-down version of what was first discussed. It would have allowed public schools to become charter schools and eventually separately-controlled, publically funded schools with their own school boards. The bill failed with a tie vote. Ken Nelson, Representative from Minneapolis was blamed by those who stayed until the wee hours of the morning. It was reported that he did not vote. It was a tie vote, and a tie vote is a no vote in the Minnesota legislature.

The Indians came very close to getting an opportunity to provide a decent education for the children of Minneapolis, the largest school district in Minnesota. Urban Indian children are the majority (of Indian children) in the United States and this step might have proven a mighty step for turning around the dismal, frightening, utterly sad statistics of our children.

## What happens next?

Opponents of the movement toward Indian control cite issues such as,

Indian children need competition to succeed.

Public school children need Indians in the schools, so as to have a multicultural experience.

And Minneapolis's school board member Judy Farmer who enjoys a liberal reputation continues to ask questions such as, if the alternative schools cannot achieve, what makes Indians think it can be done at all?

She and others of the Minneapolis school board such as David Tilsen, also reputed to be a liberal person, expressed disbelief when parents pointed to the 12-year experience of the Indian education summer school, NIIBIN, which although located within and operated within the school district is administered by the district's Indian education department.

Niibin, meaning *summer* in Ojibwe is a successful all Indian school. Its students want to come to school. They attend each day. Their parents attend regularly. Niibin and other Indian controlled schools have pointed the way for Indian parents. Over the hundreds of years of losing tens of thousands of Indian youngsters through the public schooling state and federal structure, Indians have finally learned what does work.

Literally, there needs to be control of the schools by sane adults that are Indian. Seemingly, in some situations, it apparently works for Indian children if they are predominant, but this is not always true, especially in the federal boarding schools. Reports and other materials exist on the success of this idea. Some of these items are listed in the bibliography.

One such that deserves mention is a paper by Michael P. Gross. Gross, was counsel for the Indian school Council. He is a lawyer from Sante Fe, New Mexico and has practiced Indian education law for over 20 years. Gross described the issue of coercive assimilation in his paper, *Indian control for Quality Indian Education.*[34]

Further, in Minnesota when he appeared as Counsel for the Indian school council, Gross described Coercive Assimilation to the legislature and other decison-makers. In his paper, he devotes several sentences to what he developed later into a more comprehensive issue,

*"Existing case law from Brown v. Board of Education through Yoder serves as a sufficient basis for claiming an independent Indian right to control their own education. Such a conclusion necessarily follows from the nature of the discrimination practiced against Indians. That discrimination is unique, differing totally from the discrimination practiced against blacks—although its consequences in terms of poverty, poor education, poor health and political powerlessness are similar to that suffered by all victims of racial or ethnic prejudice and discrimination. And so, just as the form of discrimination against Indians is different, so too must be the remedies."* [35]

Presently, Indians in Minneapolis and elsewhere are asking questions, exploring options and generally looking for lasting solutions. The parents in Duluth, for example, have sought a partnership with the Fond du Lac band of Chippewa Indians to pursue opening a Tribal school in Duluth, Minnesota, approximately 35 miles from the Band's borders. The Minneapolis Indian educators are pursuing a possibility with Mille Lacs band of Chippewa Indians to set up a Tribal school within the city of Minneapolis's borders.

These are difficult times, and difficult solutions are sought.

## What is possible in the present public schools?

One of the possibilities explored presently with the Indians in Minneapolis and the school district is concentrating Indian children in several of the district's sixty buildings instead of scattering the children. The special help they need cannot be provided when they are dispersed throughout the city. A target school was set up in one of the secondary schools in the fall of 1989 for school year 89-90. An elementary school was designated as an Indian school. These schools were to still remain within State desegregation guidelines which meant that approximately 200 or perhaps 300 children attend the secondary site, with the total population there approximately 1100. At the elementary site, 500 Indian children were allowed to gather, out of 1700 total in the building. There is a waiting list of Indian parents who want to send their children to the Elementary site.

The year is not complete, and therefore the jury is still out as to whether this partial solution can begin to make a difference.

Meanwhile, the district through its Curriculum department has sought help from the Portland public schools which is trying change with a scheme whereby ethnic **Bodies of Knowledge** through essays are to be provided to teachers in the school district. Eventually, the staff will learn the knowledge base and reflect this in their teaching and in the curriculum.

12

## Cultural competencies: what will work?

In 1984, my department within the school district presented a plan to the administration wherein we would begin institutionalizing multi-culturalism into the school district. We had as the main operative a cultural matrix that would allow the district to proceed building by building and therefore do it in a cost-efficient way. We also at the time and again, in the fall of this year suggested the idea of cultural competencies as it did not make sense to, under the guise of multi-cultural staff development offer wide-ranging menus to staff during district-wide development days. We would offer, for example, American Indian learning styles and out of a staff of up to 2500 we might get an audience of 25!

I had an opportunity to participate in a multicultural day in Duluth in the fall of 1989. The day was required of all staff to attend, and they were given a menu choice of at least 100 items. The sessions ranged from "multicultural elements in quiltmaking", a 3 hour session, to "around the world with Joe", a teacher with pictures of a worldwide trip, to Ukranian egg dying, a 3 hr session, to "transition for disadvantaged youth: mentorships and alternative learning programs", a repeated session limited to 25 at each sitting.[34]

I am not suggesting there is anything wrong with the choices, but administrators who are serious about giving information to their staff about children who are different and therefore require flexibility from their instructors, will organize these events in an efficient and logical manner so as to ensure there is a product. The product would be learnings that could, over time, be parlayed into skills for teachers who do not know how to educate our children.

Therefore, again this year, as I have in years past, I have asked the school district to look at a systematic and organized way of inservicing staff so as to end with a product; that of teachers who become skilled over time, in skills that may help them with the children. I also suggested a scheme for a needs assessment of the core curriculum. I actually had success with this idea, which took approximately three years. I asked the curriculum director to ask consultants (discipline lead teachers such as social studies consultant, languages art consultant, science consultant etc.) survey *every classroom teacher* to find out exactly what each teacher taught. Although Minneapolis public school teachers (approximately 2500 k-12 in sixty buildings) follow an "accepted" list of learning objective and take materials from an "accepted" list of learning materials, they are free to take or disregard items from a lengthy list. Many teachers will teach their entire lives and never touch or use the Indian-related materials languishing on the accepted learning materials list.

Eventually, after literally years of discussing this plan with the curriculum director; she finally ordered the consultants to do the survey. It was clear to me that if we were going to impact the core curriculum as everyone said they wanted to, from board members to administrative staff to teachers, to parents, that we must know what was actually taught in the core curriculum, create a matrix showing what was taught, where and then spotlight the holes, the absences in the curriculum relative to, for example, American Indian concrete and intellectual contributions . Although, through extreme effort I did get that part of the work done, I have not been able to accomplish the rest of the plan.

Yet at the beginning of the school year, fall of 1989, the New curriculum director had the amazing nerve to suggest we do multicultural curriculum for the buildings and inservice the staff. I told her at the time that we must stop this inefficient way of behaving and if there was something to be learned by the staff it must be put in learnable steps and possibly some staff would be competent and have the skills and others would not. In this way, all staff at curriculum development workshops would not be treated at the same beginning level of learning, or asked to chose from a menu of choices that will ensure no-one becomes skilled in teaching our little ones. She voiced excitement and immediately set up an appointment with me to discuss this in further depth. I immediately wrote the first pages about what cultural competencies were about in my mind.

Our conversation was in early fall. On November 8, a meeting was scheduled and cancelled. On November 27th a meeting was scheduled and cancelled. On January 4, a meeting was set and cancelled and on march 6, a meeting was set and cancelled. I kept the faith over a period of five months; as I thought I had some chance of getting the district and the administration to do something that would make sense.

The timing and cancellation routine is not unusual in a bureaucracy. Unfortunately, a bureaucracy insists the supervisor see and 'make the decision' hence the limited action-oriented change.

Most recently, the district has embarked on cultural competencies and bodies of knowledge based on the Portland (Oregon) model. They sent people to Portland and materials have been provided as well as a video of what Portland did.

## Assumptions for Cultural Competencies

However, I still have not had that meeting about how cultural competencies can be banked into skills, over a period of time, how the core curriculum can be assessed, then built again over a period of time that school districts can afford.

It is at these times that I remember an older lady telling me when I was a child, with a twinkle in her eye, inscrutable are the ways of the white man".

Recently in reading a book by Daniel Cottom, *Text and Culture/ the politics of interpretation, theory and history of literature,*[17] it was interesting and informative to read, **"These are not simply questions about the conditions of empirical knowledge. They are questions about the conception of history involved in any analysis of signifying practices and yet systematically denied in the discourse of the culture (p. 59).**

It is apparent that if an entrenched bureaucracy such as a school system, linked by economy and affinity for the fast track by its executives, is going to allow any changes at all to be made in the curriculum and pedagogy, it will be only when those who are oppressed stop mewling about trying to find areas of agreement and take the hard, high road of proving in courts if need be, that age-old cry of taxation without representation.

It is quite clear the boundaries of racism have been fully extended in the school system. Fortunately, the Court system in the United States is at a higher moral stage than the population as a whole. As Lawrence Kohlberg says in his introduction to, *The Philosophy of Moral Development* ; ***" As noted, the adult majority in American society reason at the conventional stages.(3 or 4) This poses some problems for legal philosophers and Supreme court justices whose reasoning is often at Stage 5 or 6."***

In order for the bureaucracy of the school district to allow cultural competencies with their related skills to build toward affinity with other human beings there are eight assumptions that would need to be met.

**Assumption:** A competency is teachable, learnable, observable and measurable.

**Assumption:** A competency or set of competencies described are for District staff; all staff.

**Assumption:** Competencies can be learned over time, through staff development.

**Assumption:** Competencies will be 'passed or failed', with appropriate certificate.

**Assumption:** Teachers and staff working in buildings with (for example), ten or more Indians will have a minimum of one competency specific to American Indians.

**Assumption:** The District school board and administration shall, through negotiations with appropriate bargaining agents, develop language to ensure that District staff shall move through an appropriate set of competencies per time period of (one or two years).

**Assumption:** Cultural competencies will be completely discernible, totally non-vague, completely describable behaviors that in an agreed upon period of time will be considered part of the beginning teacher package. Beginning teachers will be able to pass competencies before being hired by the District. Competency certificates must be completed prior to tenure.

**Assumption:** It is possible to 'test' out of competencies, or show in an observable, measurable way, that it is part of the individual's learned repertory.

There would be four competencies. To be judged competent to teach American Indian children. Teachers and other staff must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of at least one competency. The remaining competencies must be accumulated within a three year period.

### *Independence:*

This is the important baseline of cultural difference between American Indian Tribes and white people. Although emanating behaviors may differ among Tribal Nations, the core value of the individual's absolute independence is well known. In fact doctoral students, when writing about American Indian behavior and psychology discuss it only briefly and usually at the beginning of their studies.

Independence of the individual, as a core value, is well known in American Indian research circles, and has been discussed in a variety of reports in education.

Other scholars have discussed this aspect of American Indian Tribes and individuals. Many scholars found that white people did not respond logically to the deep vein of freedom endemic to Indian people. Instead, the United States through its political institutions have tried over the years to eradicate the core values and customs of American Indians. The boarding school syndrome, exhaustively written of, tells of the invidious methods State and Federal governments undertook against American Indian families in the name of education.

Writer after writer, observer after observer, and Indians in general have informed readers and others of the Indians' love of independence. This can be seen in the structure of Indian society, a society that rears fiercely independent people, yet people who will bend to the will of a group. Although this aspect of Indian people is an anomaly and an apparent contradiction, it has allowed a society to develop a patina of multi-cultural behaviors. For example, a Navaho can interact in a human way with a Hopi, or a Tewa, but none would agree each is like the other.



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How unfortunate that modern educators do not take advantage of these experts and ask Tribal people how to teach multi-cultural education!

Writers Rosalie H. Wax and Robert K. Thomas are helpful in understanding the concept of independence among American Indian Tribes. In Phylon, Vol. XXII, No. 4 (Winter 1961) PP. 305-317 they write,

*"In every human relationship there is some element of influence, interference, or downright compulsion. The white man has been and is torn between two ideals: on the one hand, he believes in freedom, in minding his own business, and in the right of people to make up their minds for themselves; but, on the other hand, he believes that he should be his brother's keeper and not abstain from advice, or even action, when his brother is speeding down the road toward perdition, death or social isolation due to halitosis. The Indian society is unequivocal: interference of any form is forbidden, regardless of the folly, irresponsibility, or ignorance of your brother."*

## The Domain Structure

It is useful at this point to review several definitions that will help clarify the idea of *cultural domain, cultural competencies, and cultural body of knowledge*. *Domain* means, in this case of usage, field or sphere of thought or action. *Cultural* means in this usage, having to do with the culture (ie. knowledge, customs, and arts of a people or group at a certain time, etc) and especially cultivation of the mind. *Competencies* come from the word *competent*, which means having skill or ability; capable. *Body* means the greater part of anything. *Knowledge* means that which one knows, whether through study or experience.[29]

With teachers, and other staff, the goal is to strive to master cultural competencies. Learning for mastery involves [30]

*1.0 "Receiving( attending)...defined as sensitivity to the existence of certain phenomena and stimuli, that is the willingness to receive or attend to them.*

*2.0 Responding...goes beyond merely attending to the phenomena; it implies active attending, doing something with or about the phenomena, and not merely perceiving.*

*3.0 Valuing...perceiving them as having worth and consequently revealing consistency in behavior related to these phenomena.*

*4.0 Organization...the conceptualization of values and the employment of these concepts for determining the interrelationship among values.*

*5.0 Characterization...implies organization of...values, beliefs, ideas, and attitudes into an internally consistent system...into a total philosophy or world view"*

Some of the questions posed by Lewy in the Handbook (p.232-233) will be helpful in gaining staff understanding of mastery of the competency.

## How it will work

Teachers, staff, and those who make curriculum, or amend it, will need to be familiar with the essays or other methods that are used to establish a **body of knowledge** for each ethnic/ multi-cultural group. A school district that has led in this way of injecting multi-cultural procedures into districts is the Portland Public Schools. Presently, they have a 'body of knowledge' for African-Americans and are working on one for American Indians.

Meant to be correlated with the 'body of knowledge' are established 'Cultural Competencies'. Each set of cultural competencies must be learned by teachers and demonstrated during their teaching activities.

Realistically, it will be difficult to teach teachers, and other school building staff, as well as those who interact with children, such as bus drivers, even a minimum of cultural competencies. Therefore, it is strategic to project what is a possible minimum that can be learned/taught over a period of years.

The first competency briefly discussed was that of Independence. The other three are:

2. Age-related respect
3. Connection with all living things
4. Indirect communications

Each competency will be spun out according to the steps listed above, with ways and methods of learning each competency. The learning will result in a skill which can be observed, measured, and evaluated according to levels of mastery. Thus, a competency can be demonstrated and consequently passed or failed according to evaluative, objective measures.

There would be four competencies for any building where there are 10 or more Indian children. Every staff person in the building would demonstrate knowledge and understanding of one competency, the other three competencies would be accumulated within a three year period. Maintenance of competencies would be tested at 2 and 1/2 year intervals.

Recently, a friend who is the CEO for InterRace, Vivian Nelson Jenkins gave me a copy of an article called, "Focal Point". It is in the *Bulletin of the Research and Training Center to improve services for seriously emotionally handicapped children and their families*. The article in question subtitled, "services to minority populations/ what does it mean to be a culturally competent professional?' caused me to raise my hackles of hope. This article discusses five essential elements for becoming a culturally competent helping professional. These elements are, **awareness and acceptance of difference, self awareness, dynamics of difference, knowledge of the client's culture, and adaptation of skills.** The article is an excellent, informative beginning for staff in starting their tasks of becoming culturally competent. Although the article does not discuss specifics of any ethnic group or discuss in specific terms which skills specific to a group need to be developed, it does address the broad prefacing kind of discussion most schooling professionals would demand.[31]

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## *Age Respect:*

The second competency, that of age respect, is a well-known value among American Indian people. As Indians raise their children, they create in children, normally and naturally, the almost instinctual, habitual manner of relating to older ones. It is easy to teach Indian children how to respect their elders. All Tribal nations and their families have similar, although with different detail, ways of relating to elders. Some of the changes can be attributed to compulsory education that has taken Indian children away from their families, and their society's norms. I learned the way many have learned, and it was the way I taught my children. The older child got deference from the younger one, and on it went up the ladder of age. They were around Indians as they grew up, and they took for granted that they 'waited on those older'. Younger ones get other things in tribal society, but the older ones get to be first served, are the only ones able to interrupt others, are in line first, if they are even in line at all, and so on. When my children accompanied me to my mother's passing ceremonies, it was rather nice to see they and their cousins wait on we 'older ones' as we once did when we were their age. I have always admired those who are older, and I couldn't wait to be older. I knew it would be fun to be an "old lady", and indeed it is.

The literature is replete with references, materials, books, and other written and oral materials on the value of respect toward age. It was interesting to read a review of a book on age, *How Old are you?/ Age consciousness in American Culture*, by Howard P. Chudacoff. He makes the point in his introduction that "American society began to become more complex in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and that the age consciousness and age grading that resulted intensified in the first three decades of the twentieth century. This process created much of the social and institutional organization that prevailed...and remains predominant..."[32]

In his book on *The Kingdom*, Robert Lacey, and others who have written extensively on the Arab society remarks on their deference to age, which is ingrained in childhood, *" Respect for age and seniority was etched into Faisal's brain, as into those of all his brothers... When (they) gather today, you see them shuffle themselves instinctively into order of age, even though some are separated by only a few days. Deference to elders is one of the...inviolable ground rules,..."*[33] As an example; Faisal, who governed Arabia, in meeting with his older brother, Sa'ud who was the ceremonial king," *But he never raised his voice, he kept his eyes constantly downcast and he deferred with the most extreme subservience to the man with whom he had come to disagree so bitterly. Faisal sat throughout the interview on the floor below Sa'ud as he used to sit on the carpet in front of (his father)..., and when the interview was over Faisal bowed to kiss Sa'ud's hand. Then he knelt to place the king's slippers on his feet."*

Throughout approximately 15 books on Arab society, read for other reasons, I was struck by how they taught their children to respond to and respect their Elders, (in their society, men of their family); how as young children, men such as Faisal acted as 'coffee boys' to their father, and uncles.

American Indian society, although in reality, composed of at least 300 different Tribes distinct in language, religion, and values, still have similarity in values that can be discussed in the arena of what could be useful to teachers of Indian children. Age-deference is taught to children. Other intertwining behaviors accompany that teaching. Thus, Indian children come to expect certain behaviors from adults; and Indian adults expect certain behaviors from them. I am sure it will come as a great surprise to teachers to find that American Indian children value age, especially as they think back to rude, derisive and obnoxious behavior just witnessed between a student and his older teacher. The nuances of supporting behaviors between human beings, including adults and children, would be explored and explained to teachers during competency classes. Bloom, et al., call that stage, 4.0 "organization...the conceptualization of values and the employment of these concepts for determining the interrelationship among values."[34]

## *Connectedness:*

The third competency, that of Connection with all living things, is again well represented in the literature, and American Indians, for centuries have been telling those who would listen of their value in this regard. The Indians' affinity with the Circle is merely a shorthand way of expressing that everything is connected. Many of the Elders who have passed to the Spirit World have said it, perhaps none better than Black Elk right after he reminded Neihardt,

*" For there can be no power in a square. You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round. ...Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle."*....[35] More recently, Carol Locust, an Eastern Band Cherokee wrote a piece for the Harvard Educational Review, *"Wounding the Spirit: Discrimination and Traditional American Indian Belief Systems."* In the explaining note at the beginning she writes,

*When educators debate the effects of cultural differences on educational practice, they are normally concerned with issues of language, learning patterns, and preferred communication styles. Seldom do they consider how differences in belief systems might affect educational practice..... concludes that educators must understand*

*and respect American Indian belief systems before they can begin to improve the educational experiences of American Indian children.*[36]

The Four Worlds Development Project in 1984 brought out wholeness curriculum that will assist in teaching staff about the Indian's seemingly ingrained sense of connectedness. They have an excellent series of films, materials, and curriculum, and in *Wholistic Educational Evaluation, for community transformation, a preventative approach,* the goal of education should **" transform schools into community learning centers which are actually promoting learning for human development.....Its goal must be to promote well-being (i.e. health) in the spiritual, cultural, social, economic, political, psychomotor, volitional, cognitive and psychological dimensions of the lives of the people it serves."**[37] Four Worlds' *Toward the year 2000, (1987)* is an excellent vehicle for use by staff in buildings to reach toward understanding of the four worlds this group uses as their logo. They explain the ancient symbol they use, the medicine wheel, with the four points on the circle representing the four directions, the symbolic white, yellow, red, and white races of humanity, and the four worlds we humans know; the 2 -legged, the four-legged, that which grows, and that which forms the earth, or animal, vegetable, mineral and human kind. It also stands for the four dimensions of human potentiality; that of the physical, emotional, mental and the spiritual and the four dimensions of human knowing; action, reflection, interpretation and understanding. These four worlds must be in balance.[38]

Phil Lane Jr. an educator who has worked long years on curriculum for the Four Worlds development project, provides excellent training to staff toward achievement of cultural competencies. His instruction is lucid, informed, learned, and much better, it works! He is one of those people, Tribal educators, who one thinks of when reading Cottom's passage:

*The boundary of culture can always move toward greater particularity or greater generality. Its zero points are the individual, on the one hand, and universal history, on the other....culture is assumed to be uniform across all its differences. Within the discourse of culture, we cannot imagine a member of a Tribe who could speak against the identities held in common by the Tribe, including his or her own identity as a plebeian or patrician, and make any sense in doing so....they ignore the possibility that the Tribe may contain natives who are engaged in a reflective examination of their own beliefs and practices.*[39]

And needless to say, these natives, educated at the best schools the white man has to offer, and educated in their Tribal values are not only engaged in a reflective examination of Tribal beliefs and practices, but have come to the conclusion that the white world desperately needs the values of the Tribe. These educators, if they are still willing to work with the slow, passive-aggressive self-protecting public school systems will provide the bridge, or perhaps, a convergence action of activities that will restructure and rebuild the present archaic, mono-cultural school systems. This is especially crucial when considering the United States is fast approaching the time when over fifty percent of its population will be dark-skinned, multi-cultural people.

## *Indirect Communication:*

The last competency to be discussed is that of indirect communication such as that used by Tribal peoples in disciplining their children. In Niibin, the school we run successfully each summer, we employ an Indian male from the community, provide him with a decent salary, and ask him to assume the discipline of the school. He is much like the traditional uncle Indians are accustomed to in discipline matters in their own families.

In this regard, Indians, until the coming of the white man did not hit their children. This was common enough that anthropologists, explorers, and priests commented on it in their writings. They also deplored it. Apparently, the children were seen as allowed to run around like 'wild Indians'.

Many modern-day Indian parents still believe in not hitting their children. There was a reason for this. If a society wants its Warriors to be absolutely fearless, and be independent enough to do what is necessary, it follows that one way of raising a child to be this way is not to hit him. Other reasons abide, but suffice to say, that the white world is and continues to be directly opposite. Any communication to children, be it discipline or praise, is as direct as it can be.

Indians value a more subtle approach. Subtlety, in all its forms including its farcical, broad direct opposite is what pervades Indian society. Humor, child-rearing male-female interactions; those of the young male-female, the old male -female, male-male; family interactions and all its permutations are all on the scale beginning with subtlety. Extremely well-mannered individuals, especially when speaking to their peers are inclined to be subtle, and indirect.

If Thomas and Wax, previously mentioned, are correct in their analysis of what is important in communications, it is logical to assume that non-interference is both a doctrine, and a discipline in American Indian society. Such a society will have developed through centuries of interaction with each other, various interactive skills that will range on the continuum of subtlety.

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# *Conclusion*

One skill that has been noticed and mentioned broadly by sociologists, anthropologists, and priests is one called, teasing. That label is probably a misnomer, especially as the other words used as substitutes in the Thesaurus are taunt, tantalize, torment, bother, ridicule. Apparently, the non-Indian, in observing Indians communicating with each other have decided to call it, teasing. It really is a wonderful way of communication, one that has evolved over the centuries of American Indians communicating with each other. During the Boarding schools days, beginning in the 19th century, American Indians were forced to attend federal, segregated boarding schools. In order to assure these children learn English and stop using their own language, Tribal children were put three to a room, with each from a different Tribe. One of the wonderful outcomes from this coercive action was that American Indian Tribes became even more intertribal in their actions. If one believes the authors who have written about so-called Pan-Indianism, non-Indians have made attempts to describe and define American Indian native intertribal communications.

Most Indians find these materials too confining and incorrect overall. Indians, themselves, know, appreciate and value interTribal differences. The white man in his need to bunch people up into nice bundles, give them a label and use one of the bunch to negotiate with, has made extended attempts over the years to label American Indian Tribal nations.

Teasing ( label for convenience of readers) is taught, absorbed and normed during childhood. People who have not been raised within a dominant Indian environment complete with the range of ages in a natural mix from babies to adults, to Elders will not have learned all the nuances of Indian teasing. It varies depending on age, with whom, such as, for example, between mother and child, child and auntie, friend, friend or husband, wife. Intertribal teasing takes different forms. Indian kids who attend boarding school are normed on peer intertribal teasing which is a study in itself as they were away from their homes and their normal societial norms. Such wholescale change in the American Indian family no doubt caused far-reaching change.

Teasing as a form of communication is necessary if one is to be non-interfering at one's base (of values). Indians, by and large enjoy teasing and make attempts to teach non-Indians how to do it. Usually this is an exercise in futility. Therefore, one would not attempt to teach teasing to non-Indians as a competency, one would explain that indirectness is the norm and core of all communication.

When devising the skill levels, definitions and learnings, competencies could be the lower, or simpler forms of the skills used and enjoyed by American Indians. Therefore, school district personnel could discuss and arrive at consensus (in itself a skill used by American Indians to make decisions) the skill steps used in any of the competencies.

*Understanding Human Interaction: The study of everyday life and ordinary talk*, an article by Karen Ann Watson, Research Associate, Culture Learning Institute, East-West Center[40] is a helpful article in teaching, and learning, *"what is called "culture shock" on going from one society to another, it is probably not the obvious differences which cause the greatest sense of personal disorganization. In other words, it is probably not the differences in physical landscape, climate, religion, dress or even food which brings about the strongest sense of confusion. More often, it is in the assumptions underlying everyday life, shared by members of a society by virtue of constant interaction from birth, assumptions which are so much a part of the culture that they are not even consciously held."* [41]

**Learning skills, or competencies reflecting the cultural fiber of our children taught in schools by teachers of, primarily the dominant stock, or the minority of the largest number (in Minneapolis, African-Americans) is another method in a linear line of ideas pushed forward by educators in attempting to be successful with all children in the public schooling sector. It is a truism that American Indian survivors of the public schooling sector, parents, educators and others are determined that Indian children who bring with them to public schools amounts of money, similar, or more than dominant children will have similar success; that is graduate from high school in normal numbers.**

**If after 200 years of schooling, much of it forced on American Indian Tribes, is not able to be successful, American Indian people will be forced to create a Tribal-public sector for American Indian children. As we did when the immigrants first came to the shores of Turtle Island, we would welcome all children to such schools where independence of everyone is assumed, polite, subtle, communication is the order of the day, correct, decorous behaviors to one's elders is the norm and the natural order of nature with connection to all living things is taught daily.**



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# End Notes

referred to by Michael Green in his Unicorn postcard book, Running Press, Philadelphia, Penn.(1983), primarily a book of post cards of drawings of beautiful unicorns in a variety of poses. Mr. Green refers to a history based on a manuscript that apparently only he has seen.(Green, introduction). Also see A book of Unicorns a star and Elephant book, The Green Tiger Press, La Jolla, California, 92038(1978) which is basically a picture book featuring big pictures meant to be removed from the book with various poems and other texts garnered from various sources, and see The Oak King, the Holly King, and the Unicorn by John Williamson, Harper and Row(1986) which examines in detail the Cloisters Tapestries.

[2] p. 226, The Holt Basic dictionary of American English, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. New York(1966).

[3] American Indian Holocaust and Survival a population history since 1492, by Russell Thornton, from the University of Oklahoma Press series, The Civilization of the American Indian, Norman, Oklahoma, (1987) Thorton devotes approximately five pages to telling the story of how Indians came into the Americas from Asia. Yes, he does tell about two pages of what the natives themselves believe, but it is evident from his writing that he believes in the Scientific explanation, as he says on p. 5, "Most of the evidence and logic indicate that human beings migrated from Asia across Beringa." In his preface, on xviii, he closes with the statement that "...I attempt to write from the perspective of the American Indians themselves."

[4] p.108 in The life and Times of Cotton Mather , Harper and Row,(1984), Kenneth Silverman.

[5] The Dorsey Press, Chicago, Illinois 60604(Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1989)

[6] p. 3,4, Mohawk, March 5, 1988, Madison, Wisconsin from transcribed tape.

[7] Mohawk's speech was taped during a conference held by the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin in September of 1987. The tape was professionally transcribed, and is on file.

[8] p. 4, Mohawk, supra

[9] p. 5, Mohawk, supra

[10] Johnson, Paul, *Intellectuals*, Harper and Row, N.Y.(1988), p.1

[11] Most states have compulsory schooling to age 16, and the grade level organization is from kindergarten through the 12th grade, hence the configuration, k-12. In Minnesota, kindergarten is not compulsory, and in some states, kindergarten is not offered, for example, Mississippi.

[12] any education after k-12 is usually called higher education, or post-secondary education. This includes 2-year Community colleges, liberal art colleges, universities, and technical schools, now called colleges in Minnesota. The latter prepares students for any number of jobs in the economic sector.

[13] (1989) Porsche Cars North America, Inc.

[14] p. 3, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Herbert J. Grover, State Superintendent (1990) available from: The American Indian Language and Culture Education Board, Department of Public Instruction, 125 South Webster Street P.O. Box 7841, Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7841(608) 267-9232.

[15] Tom Andersen, Bureau of Administration and Accreditation, Iowa Department of Education, "Helping students appreciate and respect Diversity: the Iowa approach", given out at the Midwest Wisconsin Human Relations Association conference, fall of 1989 in the Human Relations newsletter, Kent Koppelman, Editor, Human Relations newsletter, University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, Wisconsin 54601

[16] p. 2 listed as objective F in "Multicultural and gender-fair education plan" Minneapolis public schools, May 1989, Mae Gaskins, Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, the person in charge, and responsible to the superintendent.

[17] JD Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* Bantam, New York(1977), when my(then) young son read this book, he loved the idea of being the catcher in the rye, and we would spend hours discussing the idea.

[18] AIAT, or the A-Team is made up of American Indian professional educators, and psychologists who have articulated standards that must be met in school systems, if the American Indian students are to become caring, self-supportive, sufficient Tribal citizens who are capable of existing in the white world if that path is chosen.

[19] Vol.22, July 1916, #1, The social element of the Indian problem, pp. 252-267

[20] p.1, Wasson, 1973, University of Oregon, Doctoral Dissertation

[21] edited by Thomas Thompson, published by American Association of colleges for Teacher Education in collaboration with the teacher corps, United States Office of Education, Washington D.C., August, 1978.

[22] 1972, National Indian Brotherhood 130 Albert Street, Suite 1610, Ottawa k1p 5G4

[23] Indian School council 303 Capitol Square Building, 550 Cedar Street, St. Paul, Minnesota, 55101, chief writer, Yvonne Novack, presently Dean of Fond du lac Community college, Cloquet, Minnesota. Available copies of the Council reports are rare, but Don Allery, Chairman, Bemidji, Minnesota may have copies left; otherwise, a copy is retained by the Legislative Research Library,State Capitol, St. Paul,Minnesota 55101

[24] in North Dakota Law Review, vol #49, #2, 1973.

[25] p. 264, Gross.

[26] October 19, 1989 ISD #709 District-wide multicultural inservice, A celebration of Diversity, Department of Curriculum/staff development, a Desegregation project/ the program for the day. pp 3, 4, p.10

[27] Vol62, University of Minnesota press, Minneapolis, 1989

[28] p.xxxiii, Harper and Row,(Kolberg, 1981)

[29] definitions taken from The Holt Basic Dictionary of American English, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.(1966).

[30] concept and taxonomy steps that follow taken from Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student learning, Benjamin S. Bloom, J. Thomas Hastings, and George F. Madaus, with chapters by others et.al., McGraw-Hill company, New York (1971), especially beginning on p.228, "Defining affective objectives in behavioral terms" to p. 229.

[31] *Focal Point* summer 1988, vol 2, number 4, Portland State University, Research and Training Center, P.O. Box 751 Portland, Oregon 97207-0751

[32] p. 5, Princeton University Press, New Jersey,(1989)

[33] p. 349, Lacey, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, New York and London(Lacey, 1981)

[34] see earlier footnote, #30 .

[35] p. 164, *Black Elk Speaks* ,William Morrow, 1932.

[36] Vol. 58 No. 3, August, 1988, Cambridge, Mass. 02138

[37] p. 3, Four worlds Development Project, Faculty of Education, the University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta T1K 3M4, april, 1984.

[38] inside cover, The four Worlds Development Project, Toward the year 2000, 1987.

[39] Cottom, Daniel Text and Culture, vol. 62, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1989, pp53,54.

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[41] p. 59, supra



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Listing is not meant to be definitive, but is provided as examples of source listing used for this paper.

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Her latest ambition is to learn Ojibwe before she is sixty, "at least well enough to speak to the Creator in his favorite language".